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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE
20 September 1961

CS/P

OCI No. 3620/61

Copy No.

CURRENT INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Irish Election on 4 October 1961

1. Offices to be filled: All 144 seats in the new Dail (Parliament) will be filled, after which the Taoiseach (prime minister) will form a new government. The election is mandatory by March 1962. Since Irish elections are based on the proportional representation system, the results will not be known until a day or two after the election.

2. Party Strengths (as result March 1957 elections):

<u>Party</u>	<u>Dail Seats</u>
Fianna Fail	78
Fine Gael	40
Labor	12
Sinn Fein	4
Clann na Talmhan	3
Clann na Poblachta	1
Independents	9

3. Background:

The two principal parties are now virtually identical in their program and orientation, although originally Fine Gael was distinguishable by its greater

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sympathy for retention of Commonwealth ties. It generally receives the vote of the wealthier and pro-British elements. Both parties are essentially center-oriented; they advocate strengthening the economy through limited state assistance rather than through socialism, and the ending of partition by peaceful means. While still proclaiming Ireland's need to maintain a neutral course, both parties have upheld the trend toward more active participation in foreign affairs which Irish membership in the UN has accelerated.

Prime Minister and leader of Fianna Fail Sean Lemass and Fine Gael leader James Dillon will be waging their first election campaign as party leaders. Lemass succeeded Eamon de Valera at the time of the latter's retirement in June 1959, while Dillon was unopposed in his election as president of Fine Gael in February 1960. Each man is 62 years old.

4. Election Outlook:

In his announcement of 9 September setting 4 October as the election date, Lemass listed Ireland's application for membership in the European Economic Community as an important reason why the election should not be delayed, but there has been little evidence of any widespread interest in this government move. Fianna Fail will probably try to make the success so far of Ireland's five-year economic expansion program, adopted in 1959, the main campaign issue. There is no indication at this time that public concern over the Irish troops fighting with UN forces in Katanga will be directed in criticism against the government or that Fine Gael will seek to exploit the situation.

The Lemass government's record will make it difficult for the Fine Gael to offer any effective attack during the campaign. Its leaders, as well as

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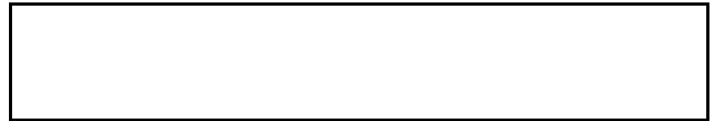
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those of the Labor party, have privately conceded that
Fianna Fail will again emerge as the largest single
party.

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